HOLIDAY GIFTS: GET IT RIGHT THIS YEAR

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Transit for teens. MBTA will offer discounted tickets to students under a pilot program to be launched next year. PAGE 02

Cheap trips

Young commuters enter Ruggles Station on Wednesday / NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, METRO

Assaults on transit drivers drop 32 percent

PAGE 05

Kim K's baby weight gain was God's wrath

PAGE 09

Red Sox miss on Lester, seek new arms

PAGE 29

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Young MBTA riders may catch a break starting next summer. / NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, METRO

Young Bostonians may finally get their youth pass

Transportation. The MBTA will lay out its plans for an upcoming pilot program.

Young people in the Boston, Chelsea and Cambridge areas may be one step closer to having better access to public transportation.

Following years of pressure from youth advocates, MBTA officials told Metro that on Thursday they'll unveil a plan to lower T passes to $26 a month, down from $75, for riders ages 12-18, whether or not they are enrolled in school. The year-long pilot program would launch in July, and would be open to 1,500 youths.

High school students over 18 and riders ages 19-21 who met a means test would also be eligible. The plan also includes a $7 seven-day pass for youths.

Advocates from the Youth Affordabili(T) Coalition have been pushing for a youth pass for about five years. Transit officials began working on the pilot program in July after MBTA General Manager Beverly Scott tasked them with hammering out a proposal.

"We're very sensitive to the assertion of the advocacy community that there is a youth affordability crisis," said Clinton Bench, who leads the program for MassDOT.

Bench will outline the proposal at Thursday's MassDOT board meeting. Though its members needn't formally vote on the pilot for it to go into effect, Bench said organizers hope the board will give its blessing.

Quoted

"It hurts to hear that people can't afford to get home or get where they need to go because they don't have enough money for the bus. I hear lots of stories about it." Allen, on how her peers suffer with transportation costs

Visit **Metro.us** to read more about MBTA news and changes.

The passes would be distributed through partnerships with each municipality, Bench said.

Asked about concerns over fraudulent use of the youth pass, Clinton said organizers will keep a close eye on patterns that suggest the passes have gotten into the wrong — or older — hands.

"We believe the risk for fraud is relatively low, since there will only be 1,500 youths in the pilot," said Bench.

If the youth pass test run is a success, it will become permanent. Bench estimates that as many as 12,000 Boston-area youths will benefit from it.

Youth Affordabili(T) Coalition member Kenisha Allen, 18, is one of them.

The Boston teen says she was forced to leave Madison Park Technical Vocational High School because she couldn't afford to travel to and from school, work and family obligations.

"To me, this pass is very important because I will be able to do what I have to do," said Allen, who has been a keen advocate for the youth pass.

Youth organizers have previously called for a $10 youth pass, but Allen said she considers the $26 price tag to be reasonable.

"To me, it's a victory. I think it's a good win."

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Crime. Man held without bail in slaying of Dorchester teenager

Boston police / FILE PHOTO

A 22-year-old Jamaica Plain man is being held without bail after being arraigned on charges he shot and killed a Dorchester 17-year-old over the summer.

Johnnie Bonnie faces multiple charges including a first-degree murder charge, unlawful possession of a firearm, unlawful possession of ammunition and unlawfully carrying a loaded firearm.

Prosecutors allege Bonnie shot Evens Archer in the back of the head on June 29 following a late-night party at a Castle Court home. Police think Bonnie ditched the murder weapon along Shawmut Avenue as he fled the scene.

Archer was in the hospital for three weeks before he succumbed to his injuries.

During months of investigation, police and prosecutors culled footage from surveillance cameras in the area, subpoenaed cellphone and other records and called in multiple witnesses to testify before a grand jury. Bonnie was indicted by the grand jury last month.

In a separate case, Bonnie was arraigned and held in September for illegally carrying a .38 Smith & Wesson, after police investigated shots fired near the Ashmont T stop. He is due in court for the Archer case on Jan. 29. **DANNY MCDONALD**

1 NEWS

Top 3

The best of Metro.us

1. 'Hacked Sony emails uncover huge Angelina Jolie slam by Scott Rudin'
2. '3 tips for beating the winter blues'
3. 'The worst people Time magazine has chosen as "Person of the Year"'

On the go

Want to read Metro on your mobile device? Get the app! All you have to do is search for Metro US in the App Store or Google Play to get all the latest in news, sports, lifestyle and entertainment for free.

Correction

An article on Page 2 Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2014, entitled "Allston weed king wages dope battle" misidentified the president of CBD Please. His name is Bill Downing.

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Harvard prof sorry for bullying restaurant

Menu mess. The battle over a $4 surcharge on takeout ends peaceably.

Ran Duan manages Sichuan Garden. / NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, METRO

The Harvard economics professor who threatened a Chinese restaurant over a $4 overcharge was described Wednesday by a former student as "a very nice guy," but socially out of touch.

The incident went viral Tuesday when the email back-and-forth between Harvard Business School professor Ben Edelman and Ran Duan, the manager of Sichuan Garden restaurant, regarding the overcharge was published by Boston.com.

"He will do anything to right a wrong if he views it as correcting the system." said the former student, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "I don't think he knows he comes off looking like an [expletive]. I feel bad. It this makes him look like a horrible guy when he's not. He's just not as with it socially as he should be."

Edelman apologized Wednesday on his personal website, writing that "it's clear that I was very much out of line. I am sorry, and I intend to do better in the future."

The brouhaha began when Edelman discovered his final takeout bill from Sichuan Garden in Brookline was $4 more than the total should have been, at least according to the prices listed on the restaurant's website.

Duan apologized, explained the website prices were out of date and then offered to refund the overcharge.

That's when Edelman doubled down, referenced state consumer protection law and pushed to be reimbursed for triple damages.

"Honestly, I think any magistrate would look at [Edelman] like he's a numbskull, but is he entitled to file something? Yeah," said Matthew Venezia, a local attorney. "I don't think he'd be awarded much more than the $4, though."

"The manager offered to do the right thing," said Venezia. "How many businesses do that? If every business comported themselves like this and were honest like this guy we wouldn't even need a consumer protection law like 93A."

Barbara Anthony, the state's consumer affairs undersecretary, meanwhile, said on Thursday that price overcharging like the kind highlighted in the email exchange is "not widespread at all" in Massachusetts. "There aren't any grand conspiracies out there to cheat consumers," Anthony said.

Edelman also wrote that he had reached out to Duan to apologize personally.

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Prisons. New state bill would extend protection for mentally ill inmates

A state representative is pushing a bill to protect mentally ill prisoners in Massachusetts.

In May of this year, State Rep. Ruth Balser, D-Newton, introduced a bill that would continue a set of Department of Correction rules requiring anyone sent to solitary confinement in the state to be evaluated for mental illness.

The bill cleared a hurdle this week, with House legislators giving the initial go-ahead to the proposal.

According to current regulations, prisoners deemed mentally ill must receive care at a residential treatment facility instead of going to solitary.

Balser / PROVIDED

Balser wants to make sure that the rule, set to expire next spring, continues in Massachusetts prisons.

Without the legislation the required evaluations would cease. Sending a mentally ill inmate to solitary could worsen their condition, Balser said.

"They could get really sick," Balser said. "When they're sent to residential treatment facilities they do much better."

According to Howard Trachtman, a local mental health advocate, a mentally ill prisoner could demonstrate behaviors viewed as disruptive in the jail setting and get sent to solitary if they were not screened properly.

"Someone with schizophrenia, for example, might have trouble understanding commands," Trachtman said.

DANNY MCDONALD

An MBTA driver sits at the wheel of a bus. / NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, METRO

MBTA: Assaults on T drivers down 32 percent

Transit. Authorities credit publicity, partnerships and prosecution for the drop.

MBTA employees seem to be a bit safer at work as assaults on drivers are down 32 percent this year compared to the same time period last year, the transit police have told Metro.

Transit Police Lt. Richard Sullivan said Wednesday the T recorded only 62 physical assaults against employees in 2014, down from 91 physical assaults against T workers reported over the same time period in 2013.

"MBTA employees perform an invaluable public service day in and day out. It is not part of their job description to be physically assaulted, spat upon and/or verbally abused," Sullivan said, warning that the conduct "will simply not be tolerated."

Transit police credit the decline to increased publicity about the problem, community partnerships, and a relentless dedication to pursuing legal recourse against violent suspects.

Though transit authorities are encouraged by this drop in assault numbers, Sullivan said the transit agency will keep pushing for a continued decline in such attacks.

In May of 2013, MBTA General Manager Beverly Scott initiated a public service announcement campaign aimed at reducing assaults on T workers.

"The Transit Police believe the commitment from top down at the MBTA clearly has had an impact and we are now seeing the benefits/results of that initiative," Sullivan said. Another contributing factor was the success transit detectives have had in following through with charges against assault suspects.

T investigators also said partnerships with community members and leaders played a crucial role.

"Without these collaborative relationships we would not be nearly as effective in carrying out our mission," Sullivan said. "When we are seeking the public's assistance in an identification of a person of interest in a criminal case, the tip comes from a member of the very community where the crime originated."

Looking back

A pregnant woman spat on an MBTA Green Line driver after a fare dispute on November 26.

- Transit Police say spitting is most common form of assault on T drivers.
- In March 2013, a bus driver was assaulted by a group of 15 teenagers.
- In October 2013, a man assaulted a bus driver as the vehicle was in motion in Chelsea causing the bus to crash.

Quoted

"MBTA employees perform an invaluable public service day in and day out. It is not part of their job description to be physically assaulted." Sullivan

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'Tis the time to give to kids

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TOM O'KEEFE

@BostonTweet

Tom O'Keefe is @BostonTweet and the founder of #DownloadBoston, a local movement to increase the awareness of Boston-based consumer startups.

For adults, Christmas is a time to eat, drink, and be merry. For kids, Christmas is a magical time filled with joy and toys from Santa. However, not every family has the financial means for a Santa, but thanks to two local charities, thousands of kids will open gifts on Christmas Day.

Globe Santa

In 1956, Globe Santa was created to deliver holiday gifts to local kids in need. During that first Christmas, Globe Santa collected $51,000 in donations, which helped 6,200 Boston families have a very merry Christmas. Last year, Globe Santa collected $1.2 million in donations for 25,924 families.

This year Globe Santa is hosting a number of events and fundraisers to help those in need. One such event is this Saturday at Anna's Taqueria (446 Harvard Street, Brookline) where Santa will be rolling burritos from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. During that time 100 percent of the proceeds that Santa rolls will help Globe Santa deliver joy to children this Christmas. For only $10 you'll not only get the best burrito in Boston, but you'll also make a $10 donation.

Home for Little Wanderers

Another Boston charity that delivers joy during Christmas is the Home for Little Wanderers. Throughout the year, The Home makes a positive impact on over 7,000 young lives, and during the holidays they give Santa a helping hand.

With their Big Wishes Gift Drive, The Home collects and distributes thousands of gifts that have been generously donated by the people of Boston.

By visiting one of their numerous drop-off locations you too can give a gift to a local kid in need. Coldwell Banker, Legacy Place, and Bernie & Phyl's are, just a few businesses [with numerous locations], where you can support the Home for Little Wanderers and help make this Christmas magical for thousands of local kids in need.

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Chicago proposes chokehold ban in wake of US protests

Ordinance. The proposal is expected to go before a full city council vote in January.

Chicago city council members have proposed a ban on the use of chokeholds by police officers working within city limits in an expansive proposal coming in the wake of the chokehold death of an unarmed black man being arrested in New York.

The proposal, which includes all security personnel such as deputy sheriffs, U.S. Marshals and private security guards, is the first among municipalities attempting to regulate arrest techniques after a grand jury last week declined to indict a New York City police officer in the chokehold death.

Protesters conduct a "Die-In" at Grand Central Station in New York City. / GETTY IMAGES

Council members in favor of the ban, which was introduced this week to the city's finance committee, say they want Chicago in front of the issue of excessive police force that has resulted in street protests across the nation.

The Chicago ordinance defines a chokehold as "any pressure to the throat or windpipe, which may prevent or hinder breathing or reduce intake of air."

A group of New York City council members are proposing a similar ordinance, which has not yet gone to the council for a vote. It does not include security personnel outside the police department, however.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio opposes criminalizing chokeholds, saying he prefers it to be a matter of department policy.

Most police departments prohibit chokeholds, but they are not illegal. In a statement to Reuters on Monday, the Chicago Police Department said officers are trained to "position anyone in a manner that allows free breathing." It has not taken a position on the ban. REUTERS

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NFL owners back new personal conduct policy after recent incidents

The new rules. It was unveiled at a regularly scheduled owners meeting in Irving, Texas.

National Football League owners on Wednesday unanimously endorsed what they called a "revised and strengthened" personal conduct policy in the wake of several domestic violence incidents involving players.

The NFL has come under fire over the last six months as it struggled with a personal conduct policy widely seen as too lenient. With big-money NFL sponsors watching closely, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell embarked on a mission to strengthen the policy.

High-profile players Adrian Peterson, Ray Rice and Greg Hardy have been in court over domestic abuse recently and the NFL has stumbled in some of its attempts to punish the players.

Goodell / GETTY IMAGES

Quoted

"With considerable assistance from the many people and organizations we consulted, NFL ownership has endorsed an enhanced policy that is significantly more robust, thorough, and formal." Roger Goodell

A special counsel for investigations and conduct will "decide the discipline for violations" of the new policy, said Goodell, who will still hear appeals but may appoint an independent panel to assist him.

The players union was not happy it was not part of the process.

"Our union has not been offered the professional courtesy of seeing the NFL's new personal conduct policy before it hit the presses," the NFL Players Union said in a statement. "Their unilateral decision and conduct today is the only thing that has been consistent over the past few months."

Among the changes are a "more extensive" list of prohibited conduct and NFL-funded counseling and services for victims, families and violators, Goodell said. REUTERS

Bloomberg poll. Half of US parents don't want their sons playing football

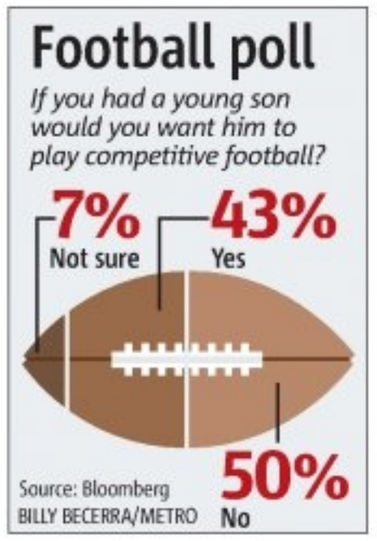
Television ratings are up and merchandise sales are booming, but longer-term trends don't look as rosy for football. According to a new Bloomberg Politics poll, only 17 percent believe it'll grow in popularity in the next 20 years.

These are grim numbers for a sport that's seeing an onslaught of negative attention, including a parade of National Football League players accused of abusing their wives or children; a team name so offensive that some news organizations refuse to print it; and, perhaps most troubling to parents, the growing body of evidence that repeated blows to the head can cause long-lasting brain damage. The sport's troubles have caught the attention of Congress, whose members hauled a league official to Washington for a Senate hearing earlier this month. Individual lawmakers have proposed ending the league's tax-exempt status and putting its coveted antitrust exception up for a five-year review.

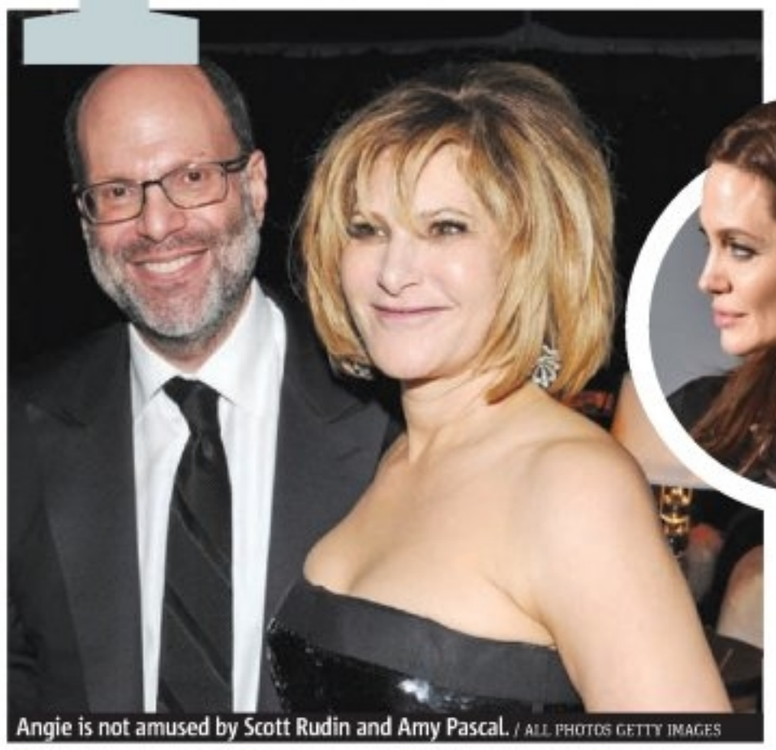
The survey was conducted by Selzer & Co. / BILLY BECERRA, METRO

The finding suggest that, over the course of time, football could go the way of boxing, a marquee American sport in the early part of the 20th century that declined amid a similar set of dynamics: changing perceptions of its brutality and star athletes making headlines for violent crimes.

The poll of 1,001 U.S. adults has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. BLOOMBERG



1 That Sony hack is the gift that keeps on giving



Angie is not amused by Scott Rudin and Amy Pascal. / ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Now that all the personal Social Security numbers and salary dust has settled from the massive Sony hack, we're starting to get down to some good Hollywood dirt. And let's just put it this way: Super-producer Scott Rudin almost certainly won't be working with Angelina Jolie again. In blistering emails back and forth with Sony chief Amy Pascal while trying to get their botched and abandoned Steve Jobs biopic moving, Rudin continually bashed Jolie and her desire for a big-budget Cleopatra movie directed by David Fincher. How does Rudin really feel about Jolie? Here he is in his own words:

"I'm not destroying my career over a minimally talented spoiled brat," Rudin writes in an email to Pascal. "She's a camp event and a celebrity and that's all, and the last thing anybody needs is to make a giant bomb with her that any fool could see coming. We will end up being the laughing stock of our industry and we will deserve it." So it looks like "Cleopatra" won't be starting production anytime soon.

Also revealed by the leak? Something that is sure to make some fanboys very, very sad. Purloined emails show great effort was made this year for Sony to ease its grip on "Spider-Man," its last remaining successful franchise, in the hopes that Marvel could do a better job with it. Eventually the talks broke down, though, so Spidey won't be popping up in the next Captain America film. Instead, Sony is apparently doubling down on plans to milk the Spider-Man franchise for all its worth, including films focusing on obscure villains and characters such as Aunt May. All right, Marvel fans, let's pour one out for what might have been.

2 Lily Allen furious anyone would suggest she'd quit drinking

Lily Allen is livid over gossip reports that she is "trying to grow up" and giving up alcohol. Seriously, how dare they suggest such a thing? Instead, Allen took to Twitter to suggest that we all give up ... Twitter? "Let's give up social media and the Mail Online. It's killing me. That is all," Allen tweeted, though it clearly was not actually all: "I feel like we're not evolved enough to handle the Internet, psychologically. I preferred real records and newspapers with news in them. Everything was just better and nicer. We were nicer. And I wouldn't be here." By here she means Twitter, which she thinks we should all give up. Got it.

3 Kim Kardashian considers weight gain God's punishment

Kim Kardashian has an interesting take on pregnancy weight — and how much time God spends thinking about her. In an interview with Elle's U.K. edition, the perfectly reasonable and sensible Mrs. Kanye West says of putting on weight while pregnant: "I'd think God was doing this for a reason. He was saying: 'Kim, you think you're so hot, but look what I can do to you.' My body just went crazy. After five months I swore I'd never get pregnant again. I got so huge and it felt like someone had taken over my body." A personal relationship with a higher power that spitefully has it in for her? Looks like some of her husband's worldview is rubbing off on her.

4 Avril Lavigne asks fans to pray for her

Evidently, Canadian singer and former Nickelback fan Avril Lavigne's current mysterious health issues are so serious that she's letting the hashtag #PrayForAvril be a thing — and even tweeting it herself. In a Twitter direct message exchange with a fan account, Lavigne revealed, "I feel bad because I haven't been able to say anything to the fans to let them [know] why I've been absent" and, "I'm not feeling well. I'm having some health issues. So please keep me in your prayers." Following the release of the exchange, a rep for Lavigne confirmed the health issues to Billboard while clarifying that the singer is definitely not pregnant, despite speculation.

5 Scarlett Johansson fully endorses breastfeeding

ScarJo engages in boob talk with Babs.

Speaking of baby weight, in keeping with the grand tradition of famous people procreating, new mom Scarlett Johansson has weighed in on the topic of losing weight post-pregnancy, thanks to the probing questions of Barbara Walters. And Johansson is firmly on Team Breastfeeding. "It's the best way to get back in shape," she tells Walters during a "10 Most Fascinating People of 2014" special interview. "[I do] the whole bit. I'm nursing and I love it." So there you go.

THE WORD

Ned Ehrbar takes on the world of gossip.

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Daily video

YOUTUBE, HOW IT SHOULD HAVE ENDED

How 'Guardians of the Galaxy' should have ended

You can now enjoy one of the year's biggest surprise hits, "Guardians of the Galaxy," in the comfort of your own home, Blu-ray special features and all. But one feature you'll have to go online to see is the film getting the animated How It Should Have Ended treatment. Apparently, they think Ronan the Accuser should've won by totally destroying everything.

2 CULTURE

Twitter feed

Today, John Stamos is facing a tough decision, Roseanne Barr has found the one, Judd Apatow doesn't want anyone reporting on the Sony hack, Kirstie Alley knows how to say hello and Joss Whedon has awards on his mind.

@JohnStamos: Morning sex or catch up sleep?

@therealroseanne: Thank god gays can marry! Now i can marry my tesla! #trueLove

@JuddApatow: in life we all decide what is right and I think printing private information because evil people leaked it is wrong.

@kirstiealley: Hello with whipped cream on top

@josswhedon: I don't care about Oscars. But my next project, "Mecha-Keanu vs Gun-Bot from Planet Titties: A Christmas Miracle" means they're all mine

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'Exodus: Gods and Kings'

1 Having already played Jesus, John Rolfe and Batman, Christian Bale adds Moses to his CV, albeit one who talks to God not through a burning bush but through a petulant 9-year-old bully. Joel Edgerton and John Turturro co-star as Egyptians, both buried under a ton of mascara.

'Top Five'

2 Chris Rock hasn't had a ton of luck with films, but he finally gets there with his third directorial work — an improv- and cameo-heavy semi-serious comedy in which he plays a movie star spending the day flirting with a New York Times journo (Rosario Dawson).

'Wild'

3 Perhaps Reese Witherspoon trawling some 1,100 miles of Pacific coastline trail doesn't sound thrilling, but know that the flashback-heavy screenplay is by Nick Hornby and that Witherspoon is at her grumpy best.

ADMIT ONE

Metro rounds up what's in cinemas this week.

MATT PRIGGE
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'The Imitation Game'

4 Benedict Cumberbatch brings his odd presence to bear on the role of Alan Turing, the man who helped crack the Nazi's Enigma machine, thus helping to win WWII for the Allies and, on top of that, essentially paving the way for the creation of the computer — only to wind up driven to suicide because he was gay in a time when homosexuality was illegal in England.

Blinged-out pharaoh Joel Edgerton faces off against Christian Bale's Moses in "Exodus: Gods and Kings." / KERRY BROWN

'Zero Motivation'

5 Milking the Israeli army for office comedy yuks, this tells a triptych of stories about female cadets who deal more with boredom and staple fights than ethnic strife.

'The Pyramid'

6 The holiday season is a profitable time at the movies, which is why Hollywood decided to release — well, dump — just one wide release last weekend: some horror thing about people trapped inside one of Egypt's world wonders.

'Penguins of Madagascar'

7 Amazingly, it took the makers of the undying animal toon franchise nearly a decade to realize they should give the films' aquatic birds their own spinoff movie. Are people even still nuts for penguins? Anyway, this is actually delightful.

'Horrible Bosses 2'

8 Instead of going next-level, the sequel to the surprise hit goes down a peg, having its three antiheroes attempting to merely kidnap, not kill, a mean jerk (Chris Pine).

'The Theory of Everything'

9 Stephen Hawking gets the full Great Man biopic treatment, with Eddie Redmayne playing the theoretical physicist into his older age. Felicity Jones plays Jane, his wife.

'The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 1'

10 Suzanne Collins' dystopian saga is the latest to have one of its books divided into two movies, though this means all the big action is pushed off until "Part 2," which won't come out for another year.

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Q&A BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH IS PLAYING THE 'GAME' TO WIN

In "The Imitation Game," Benedict Cumberbatch plays Alan Turing, who basically ended WWII. / THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

Interview. The actor wants you to know about the hero he plays in the WWII drama "The Imitation Game."

When Benedict Cumberbatch signed on to play WWII code breaker and computer pioneer Alan Turing in "The Imitation Game," he became pretty darn enamored with the man. And he thinks you should be, too. So here is why Cumberbatch thinks Turing is such "an extraordinary, extraordinary, extraordinary human being" — and why the film, which chronicles how the tide of war turned, deserves your attention.

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH
WIREIMAGE

He made great things out of great suffering "All of the worst moments in his life led to achievements. Being ostracized from a group made him think about isolating work. Not understanding how to communicate because so much of what he had to deal with in his life had to do with secrets made him an expert cryptographer. The idea of clandestine, repressed coding and analyzing that language was just completely borne out of his circumstance."

His humorlessness can be funny "It should be funny — and sometimes unintentionally on his part. It's him missing the point, or not missing the point but everyone else using lazy language and him thinking they mean literally what they mean. I don't think he was always trying to be a pedant. I think he genuinely did think in a very literal way, hence his discoveries."

Spoiler alert

It didn't end well for him

"I think it definitely was, without a doubt, suicide. He ended his life," Cumberbatch says of Turing's demise. Turing was convicted of "homosexual acts" in 1952 and punished with chemical castration. "The doctor got embarrassed about giving him [estrogen] injections so he put an implant in his hip, and it went on operating after the two-year sentence had finished. And he carved it out with a carving knife — he literally cut into his leg. This extraordinary mathematician and war hero cut into his own leg to try to stop it. And the desperation of that leads me to believe there was absolutely no way that it was anything other than suicide, conspiracy theories be damned."

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TV watch list

COMEDY

'A to Z'

Andrew and Zelda hit another big couple milestone: getting each other Christmas gifts. They decide to ask their friends for a little advice, which, on a sitcom, is generally a bad idea.
9:30 P.M., NBC

TALK SHOWS

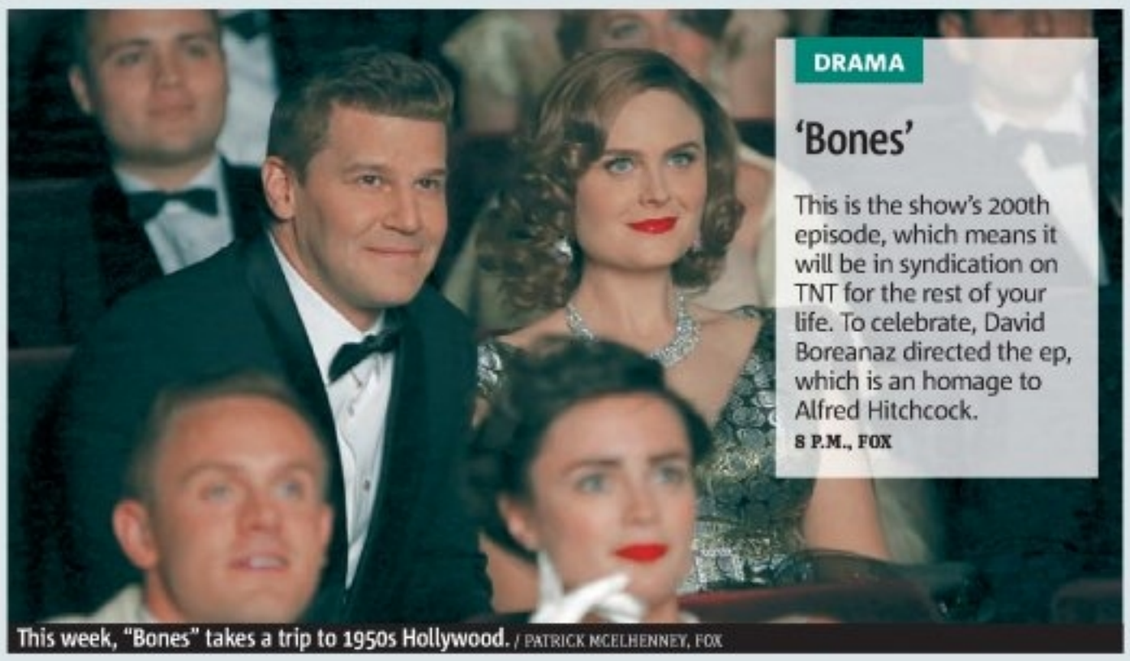
'The Daily Show'

Jon's guest for the day is Mick Foley, former professional wrestler and current women's rights advocate. Does hearing that make you feel like an underachiever? **11 P.M., COMEDY CENTRAL**

REALITY

'Project Runway: Threads'

The young designers find themselves faced with the challenge of coming up with a design for a magazine cover. **10 P.M., LIFETIME**
LISA WEIDENFELD



DRAMA

'Bones'

This is the show's 200th episode, which means it will be in syndication on TNT for the rest of your life. To celebrate, David Boreanaz directed the ep, which is an homage to Alfred Hitchcock.
8 P.M., FOX

This week, "Bones" takes a trip to 1950s Hollywood. / PATRICK MCELHENNEY, FOX

Laura Dern plays Reese Witherspoon's extremely chipper mom in the hiking movie "Wild." / FOX SEARCHLIGHT

Laura Dern plays nice in latest role

Interview. The acclaimed actress finds the mom she plays in "Wild" inspiring — up to a point.

Laura Dern has been playing moms recently, and although the ones in "The Fault in Our Stars" and "Wild" are both loving, they're very different. In the former, she was taking care of her cancer-plagued daughter (Shailene Woodley). Here, she's Bobbi, the once-abused, now upbeat mother to Cheryl Strayed (Reese Witherspoon). Bobbi's sudden death causes Cheryl to descend into self-destruction then try to rebuild herself — by going on an 1,100-mile solo hike.

On playing a character who's so optimistic: "I've played characters who want to be happy, and so they fake it until they hope to make it. And I've played people who have a bit of a Pollyanna thing. When I was younger, I would play the sweet girl or the girl next door, who's happy and innocent — even in 'Blue Velvet.' But to experience the impact that Bobbi seems to have on all of us [by seeing the film] is to get this sense of earned gratitude of having walked through hell. We each have our own walk through hell, but she had a pretty full plate of it."

Bobbi's backstory: "She was willing to leave horror and abuse in an era when there were no hotlines and no one was saying there is something called 'domestic violence.' That she went through all of that and could say the positive things she said to her daughter with such genuineness — it's very inspiring to play someone like that. I certainly now wake up most mornings thinking of life that way."

Still relevant

"Wild" is set in the '90s but doesn't always feel like it: "Jean-Marc cared so deeply and wanted this story of grief and healing to feel timeless. Even though he told Cheryl's story through music, with the death of Jerry Garcia and these moments that lock us into time, I thought he really carefully navigated it so the larger story was what you saw more of. The fact that nature was a character in the film makes it timeless."

LAURA DERN
GETTY IMAGES

The pain of Bobbi's passing: "[Director Jean-Marc Vallee] made sure we got to know her, so you longed for more. You can feel the grief of the loss of this woman."

Cheryl's need to transcend her dark past: "You're seeing a woman explore all these places, and you're also hearing her feel and express that she is shame-free — that she is willing to honor herself and even her choices. They got her back to herself — or to herself for the first time. That's so refreshing, to be reminded by a film that one doesn't need to have shame. Everyone's walking around with it."

The film's view of strong yet vulnerable women: "The circumstances she put herself in were really beautiful and scary and poignant. Let me tell you, you ain't seeing me do it. I told Cheryl, 'I'm so excited you went on this hike and I never have to.' I'll take a three-hour hike, but I'd like a few friends to come."

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Jake Bugg heads to DVD

Interview. A new concert DVD showcases the singer, but he's not letting success get to him.

Jake Bugg thinks Americans are "real optimists." / WIREIMAGE

Jake Bugg is trying to get used to fame. The singer, now 20, had an international hit with "Lightning Bolt" and has a concert DVD, "Live at the Royal Albert Hall," coming out on Dec. 23, but adjusting to the big life has come with its challenges.

"You get people going, 'Alright, Jake, you remember our Kelly, don't you? I think you met her when you were about 3.' I'm like, 'Yeah, but I don't know her now. You never came 'round and said hello before' ... but that's how it is," recalls Jake of a night out in his hometown of Nottingham.

The British singer-songwriter is wary of fame. Some of his cautiousness stems from growing up in a crime-ridden housing project — the source of much of his material for his first album.

Despite his boyish looks, Bugg is an old soul, describing the snap-and-overshare millennial generation as "crazy." "People are really taken by fame in this day and age," he says.

"I like to keep to myself, but if fame and publicity is something that comes along with it and it helps maintain my career and what I want to do, I'm willing to do it," Bugg says.

False peppiness isn't Bugg's bag. On stage, the man who penned the crowd-rousing "Lightning Bolt" shuns showmanship for craftsmanship.

Bugg, known for his Bob Dylan-esque warbling vocals, finds it hard to pander to the self-promotional positivity of America. "I can't be so honest [during interviews]," he says, before quickly correcting himself: "I'm still honest, but everything has to be so great in the U.S. — they're real optimists."

Luxe life

Big spender

Bugg, whose reticence belies his arena selling-out performer trade, says he does "sometimes have the odd mad one once in a while."

"But I think when you go to those clubs, from what I've seen, everyone is trying to outdo each other by buying the most expensive bottle of champagne. And it's like, a bottle of champagne that costs £500 [roughly $784] will probably taste the same as a £5,000 [roughly $7,841] bottle, but it's all about image, isn't it?" he says.

Bugg won't be jumping to buy glitzy drinks, though. He prefers other luxuries: "I only buy vintage guitars, and they're an investment."

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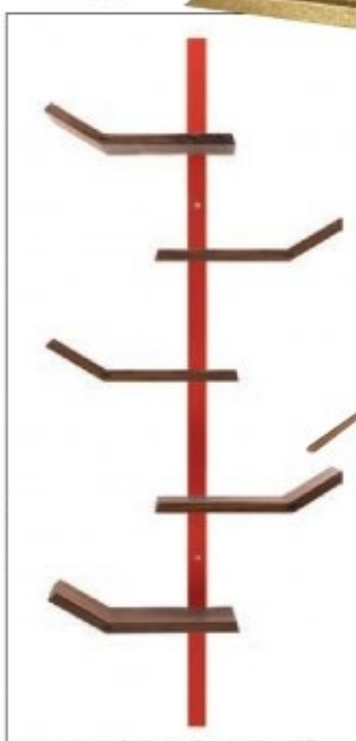

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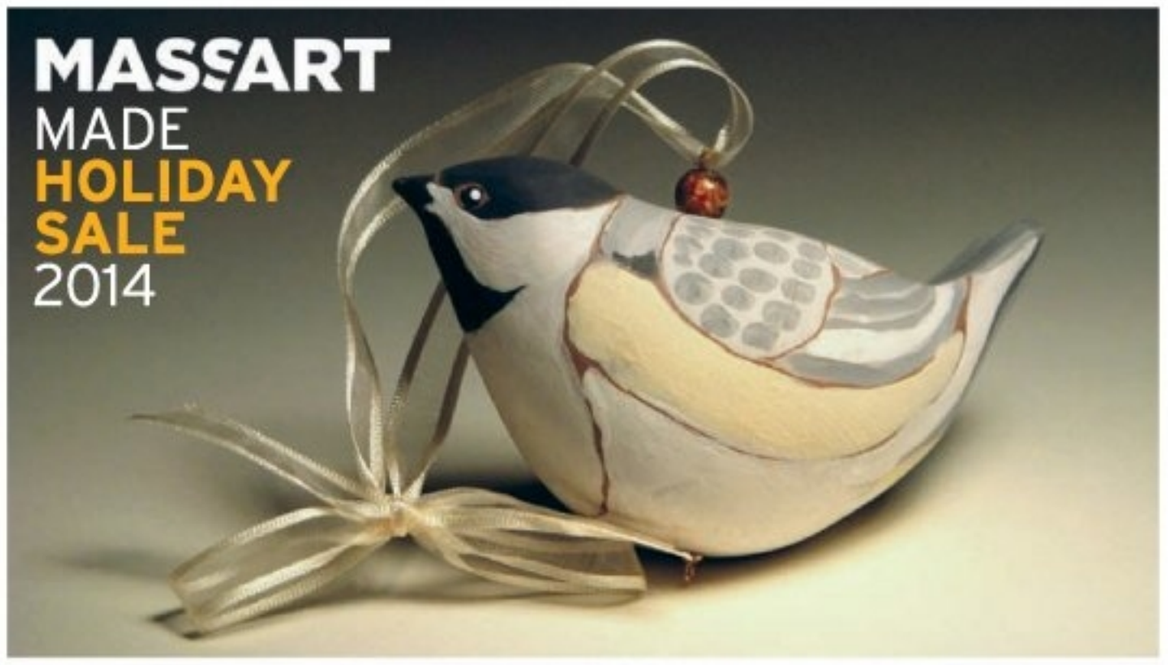

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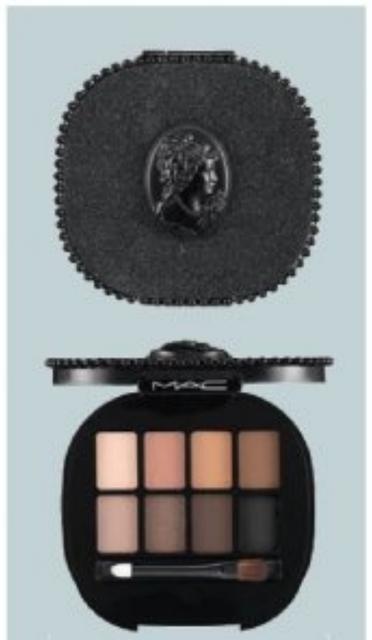

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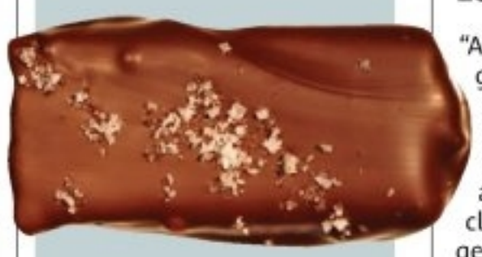

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"For your mother-in-law who's addicted to chocolate, or that favorite nephew who just made it through his first college finals, this collection of six chocolate-dunked goodies includes classics like animal crackers, graham crackers and pretzels, as well as more unusual treats like Cheerios. Because everything's better covered in chocolate, right?"

Lebkuchen, $34

"An awesome standalone gift for next-door neighbors, book club pals and your kids' teachers. These beautiful, delicious cookies are inspired by a German classic and come in a gorgeous tin embossed with the NYC skyline."

Holidaylicious Sweets, $70-$100

"A great gift for BFFs, clients, officemates or anyone else you know who has a serious sweet tooth. Hey, winter days are long and getting longer. We all need a little something to help us get through!"

Germain-Robin Single Barrel Brandy, $80

"Perfect for those friends of yours who go crazy for anything French, your brother-in-law who actually owns a brandy snifter or a hard-to-impress boss. This brandy is made in California, but we think it's as good as, if not better than, anything being made overseas. It's a Mouth exclusive."

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Nail news

$18, SMITHANDCULT.COM

Beauty. We love these two new lacquer brands.

Smith & Cult

Who knew your nail color could say so much? For Dineh Mohajer, it's the easiest form of self-expression. The Hard Candy founder, who sold the popular '90's brand to LVMH in 1999, is back in the beauty arena with a new line of five-free nail lacquers called Smith & Cult.

"It's based on a diary of a beauty junkie," explains Mohajer. "Each color corresponds to stuff that happened to me, stuff that happened to my girlfriends at different times in our lives." The lacquers in the 30-shade, high-pigment collection each have a quirky name and an intricate backstory created by Mohajer. Take "Cut the Mullet," a pastel blue — it represents a girl at an art opening getting hit on by an annoying hipster.

"I think having an emotional experience to the nail polish from a story, there's something to that," says Mohajer. We can't wait to hear the experiences she dreams up to go along with her lip gloss line, launching next.

The glamorous packaging

"Smith represents the elegant. And Cult is the other end of the spectrum — it represents the darker side of our lives," says Mohajer.

TINA CHADHA
@TinaatMetro
tina.chadha@metro.us

Long-lasting

Caption

The frustrating thing about manicures — besides having to wait for your nails to dry, unable to scroll through Instagram — is that most of the time you see a chip within 24 to 48 hours. Enter Caption. The new hybrid nail polish line performs like a gel but without the wait or tedious soaking removal process. "It can go up to nine days without chipping," says co-founder Greg Salo. How it works: The line is formulated with a nail-hardening base coat, a plasticizer inside the polish to give it the flexibility of a gel and volcanic glass for that glossy shine. Caption also helps strengthen nails and is DBP, toluene and formaldehyde free.

$14, CAPTIONNAILS.COM

Marsala mouth

KATE HUDSON
GETTY IMAGES

Pantone named Marsala — "a naturally robust and earthy wine red" — as the official 2015 color of the year. We just happen to think the vampy shade is the perfect lip color for this frigid weather. It pairs perfectly with our somber sweaters and put-off mood. **TINA CHADHA**

1 Topshop Beauty Lips in Wicked

$12, Topshop.com

2 Tom Ford in Black Dahlia

$50, TomFord.com

3 FLOWER Kiss Me Twice Lip & Cheek Chubby in Raisin the Roof

$9.99, Walmart.com

The iPod Classic stored all of your music and more. Why do they no longer exist, again? / GETTY IMAGES

Apple. Remember the discontinued iPod Classic? They now sell for a grand

Fans of the iPod Classic were evidently being serious when they expressed their anger and surprise when it was discovered that Apple had sneakily discontinued the popular mp3 player in the wake of the iPhone 6 and Apple Watch announcements. Almost immediately, the item was removed from the company's online store. And those fans are now willing to shell out quite a bit for the dedicated music player.

The 160-gigabyte capacity iPod Classics are now selling for as much as £670 (or about $1,000) in the U.K., according to the Guardian, while in the U.S., they're topping out on Amazon at the seemingly much more reasonable $490. But that's still a lot more than the $249 the Classic went for before being killed off. Oh, and if you've got an old iPod Classic kicking around and want to cash in, even used ones are going for up to $500 on eBay. But if this is any indication, that price will only go up, so list carefully. **NED EHRBAR**

PLUS

Party dresses

Three festive picks

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SEQUIN SHIFT DRESS
$44
BOOHOO.COM

ZARA
ETHNIC PRINT
SEQUINED DRESS
$120
ZARA.COM

SANDRO
LACE EMBROIDERED DRESS
(EVENING CAPSULE COLLECTION)
$645
SANDRO-PARIS.COM

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On sale Friday

Joe Nichols
Feb. 28, House of Blues

Galactica
March 20, House of Blues

They Might Be Giants
April 23, House of Blues

G. Love & Special Sauce
March 7, House of Blues

Bleachers
April 7, House of Blues

MisterWives
April 1, The Paradise

JD McPherson
March 4, The Sinclair

Lady Lamb the Beekeeper
March 7, The Sinclair

Andrew Jackson Jihad
March 21, Royale

Grizfolk
Feb. 8, Middle East Upstairs

Patience for the ride: Centro-matic's final tour

Interview. The Texas band hits the road one last time.

Get ready to say goodbye — this is probably your last chance to see Centro-matic live. / MATT PENCE

After 18 years, 11 full-length recordings, seven EPs and countless days on the road, Centro-matic has decided to call it a career as they prepare to embark on one final tour. There was no bad blood that led to the decision, no egotistical battles for control and none of the typical drama that tends to end bands, just the knowledge that it's time to wind down and celebrate the end of their career as they began it: on their own terms.

After their recent release, "Take Pride in Your Long Odds," Will Johnson and company agreed that it might be time for a formal farewell. "It became present on my mental landscape around springtime," says Johnson over the phone from Texas as he packs the Centro-matic van one last time.

"We encountered a handful of scheduling conflicts with regard to touring. I was also at the point writing-wise where I haven't been writing much rock music," he says. "I always said if we ever got to that point where we couldn't be a true band and give it the best we could that I didn't want it to be hobbled and limp along. We made the decision and figured out a way to do this in the most celebrated way we could."

They handpicked the lineup for all the bills and booked shows at their favorite places to play so they could, as he explains, "really take it for one last, true, fun lap instead of dissolving and going away."

The prolific Johnson first joined forces with Matt Pence, Scott Danbom and Mark Hedman in 1997. Quickly becoming the pride of Denton, Texas, Centro-matic would, in time, evolve from their lo-fi beginnings to a fleshed-out rock band defined by dynamics and dedication. With the suspenseful sparseness of harrowing strings and scant bass and drums, Johnson's weathered warble weaved their songs in-and-out of emotional crescendos. Although their music always maintained an earnestness, even in its incremental onslaught of distortion.

"I'll always be really proud of our recordings and our live show, but I think the thing I'm most proud of is that we have maintained a care and compassion for each other over the years as we've basically become adults together," Johnson says. "We started this thing when we were living in small little shanty-type rental houses in Denton right out of college trying to figure out what to do with our lives and trying to figure out who we were. And we've kept this lineup intact. I'm really proud of the type of racket that we've been able to make together. We make a specific sound that I think represents our friendships and our history together."

If you go

Centro-matic

Saturday, 9 p.m.
Great Scott
1222 Commonwealth Ave, Allston
$12, 21+
617-566-9014
www.ticketmaster.com

NOLAN GAWRON
@MetroBOS
letters@metro.us

Also on stage

Modern Baseball

Sunday, 6 p.m.
The Paradise
967 Comm. Ave.
$15, 800-745-3000
www.ticketmaster.com
This Philadelphia emo band is distinguished by the vocals of frontman Brendan Lukens, whose nasal timbre lies somewhere between "anti-folk" singer Jeffery Lewis and the Weakerthans' John K. Samson. Singers in this genre can sometimes oversell their songs' emotional content, but Lukens has a geeky sincerity that keeps the music's post-adolescent melancholia from turning into mere melodrama.

JESS FLYNN

Also on stage

Monogold

Saturday, 8 p.m.
O'Brien's Pub
3 Harvard Ave., Allston
$8, 21+, 866-777-8932
www.ticketweb.com
This Brooklyn band creates a shiny, neon-colored psychedelic musical universe, but never a sedate one — for all its echoey, tripped-out bliss, Monogold's music has a lot of spry rhythmic work that keeps it wakeful and clear-eyed, and the sort of oddball falsetto vocals that are starting to feel a little overused but are mostly still pretty dang amusing. **MATTHEW DINARO**

CHRIS BROWN

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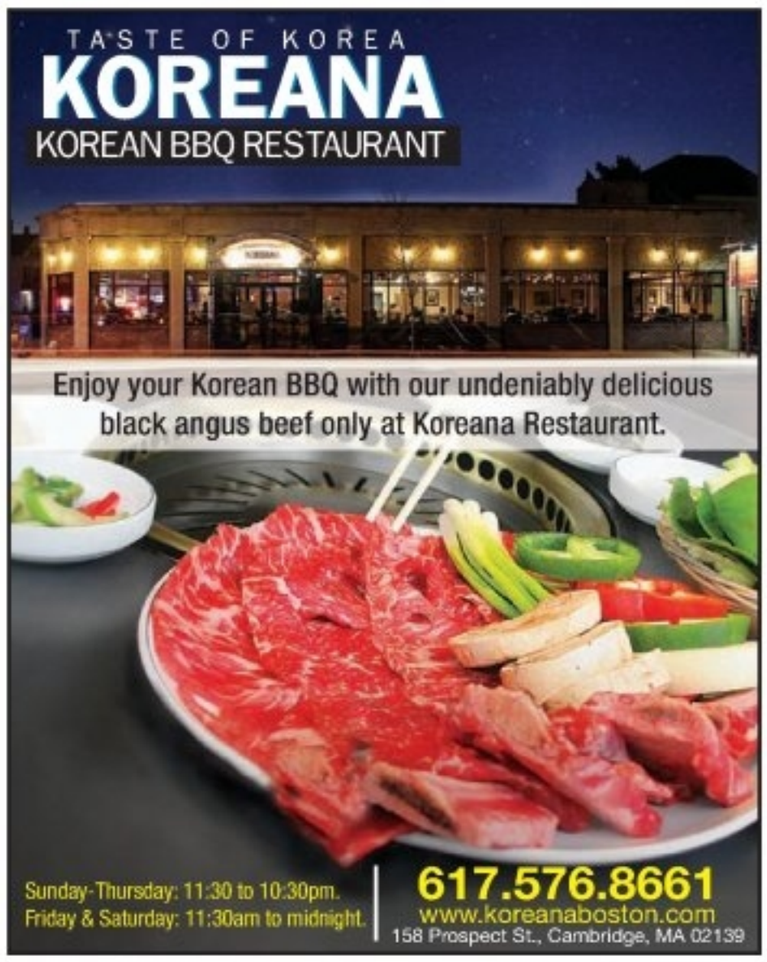


GET COZY IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT

When Blue Inc. opened a few years ago, the Financial District spot had promise, and demonstrated a sense of playfulness with their cocktail concepts. But something about the space never clicked. For all of the things it did well, there was something too fluorescent and stylized about it. The new offering in that same small space, Broad Street Riot, has taken the vibe in the opposite direction, from sparkling and effervescent to distressed and moodier. It's an improvement.

"I think the No. 1 thing that people say that has been here before and after is it's just comfortable," bar manager Kobie Ali, recently of the Beat Hotel, explains. "I think the kind of earthy tones just warm the room."

While not necessarily the type of period-specific decor you get from a lot of history-minded barrooms down here (the name is a reference to an 1837 riot that took place nearby), it's close enough. The bar itself, and some of the tables throughout the cozy (or cramped, depending on your mood) space is made from re-constituted wood from a WWI supply vessel, for example.

The drinks coming over that bar tend to focus around whiskey, Ali says. "Whiskey is a big part of what we do. Because the room is kind of a warm, comfortable throwback, we do old pre-Prohibition classics, with a couple of wrinkles of our own sprinkled in." Nothing too outlandish, however. "We wanted to keep it simple and let the components shine for themselves. Whiskey is so good you don't need to do much."

You might also remember the name from the Mighty Mighty Bosstones song "Riot on Broad Street." / DEREK KOUYOUMJIAN

Quoted

"I think we're always going to be a simple bar. You can ask for any of those classics and we'll have bartenders that are well-versed in executing them."

Kobie Ali, Broad Street Riot bar manager

Among those are variations on the greater Manhattan template, like a Green Point I had, made with bourbon, Punt e Mes, yellow chartreuse and Angostura bitters, or the Red Hook, made with rye, Punt e Mes and maraschino liqueur. "I just like the balance. The overproof rye with softness of Punt e Mes and Luxardo gives it a nice cherry finish," Ali says. "It's just a little sweeter, a little more refined than a regular Manhattan."

"I think when it comes to the classics, everyone likes a play on a Manhattan," he says, but his current favorite — and it's a good one — is another classic: the Alaska. Here he uses an Old Tom gin to imbue a little more of a whisky barrel feel, along with yellow chartreuse and orange bitters. "People are always shocked at the components, but it's as simple as it gets," he says of guests he turns on to the cocktail. "It's simple, with each component highlighting the other thing. That's the kind of cocktail we gravitate toward."

If you go

Broad Street Riot

131 Broad St.
617-350-7468
broadstreetriot.com

THURSTY
LUKE O'NEIL
@LUKEONEIL47

THEATER

JEFFERY MOSSER

'Distant Neighbors'

Through Sunday
Boston Playwrights' Theater, 949 Comm. Ave., $20, 866-811-4111, www.freshinktheatre.org
In this play by Patrick Gabridge, a piece of extraterrestrial debris crash-lands in a suburban neighborhood, breaking down a shared fence and forcing the previously standoffish residents to truly get to know each other. It's the sort of small-scale sci-fi premise that Rod Serling would've liked, showing the power of a mysterious event to remind us of our existential situation.

SPONSORED

The Boston Conservatory 'Little Murders'

Dec. 9-12
The Boston Conservatory Theater
31 Hemenway St.
Box Office: (617) 912-9142 or www.bostonconservatory.edu/tickets
www.bostonconservatory.edu/perform
This satirical dark comedy involves a depressed New Yorker embroiled in an urban nightmare involving his fiancee's family, marriage without faith, muggings and a sniper's bullet.

SPONSORED

'Late Nite Catechism: Sister's Christmas'

Dec. 16-31
The Larcom Theatre
13 Wallis St., Beverly
Tickets On Sale Now!
617-531-1257
www.larcomtheatre.com
Sister is back with "Late Nite Catechism: Sister's Christmas, The Mystery of the Magi's Gold." It's "CSI: Bethlehem" in this holiday comedy extravaganza, as Sister takes on the mystery that has intrigued historians throughout the ages — whatever happened to the Magi's gold?

BOOKS

Peter Yarrow and Noel Paul Stookey

Thursday, 7 p.m.
Porter Square Books
25 White St., Cambridge
Free, 617-491-2220
www.portersquarebooks.com
The two male members of the iconic folk group Peter, Paul and Mary will appear to discuss the trio's new photo-filled book, which takes a look back through the years of their storied career. Some die-hard '60s folk revivalists considered the group to be too pop-friendly, but that very pop accessibility also played a role in helping spread awareness of the folk revival — and its political conscience — to a much wider audience than it might have without them.

MOVIES

'Black Christmas'

Friday and Saturday
Coolidge Corner Theater
290 Harvard St., Brookline
$11, 617-734-2500
www.coolidge.org
Some people name 1974's "Black Christmas," about a sorority stalked by a murderous madman over winter break, as the first proper "slasher" film. Fans of "Scream" will recognize the killer's method of intimidation by obscene phone calls, but the idea of the murderer as an anti-hero would come later — this guy is just plain scary. **MATTHEW DINARO**

Horoscope

♐ Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21. Long-term connections and valuable information will come your way from a social or business gathering. You will receive admiration and approval for your innovative ideas.

♑ Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20. You will have good luck when it comes to money matters if you have scrutinized the details carefully. A joint venture is worth looking into.

♒ Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18. Love and romance will be on your mind. Now is the time to make a commitment or promise to someone important to you. Follow your intuition.

♓ Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20. Someone you thought you could trust is likely to betray you. Collect your thoughts before doing anything you may regret. Acting out of fear or anger will result in bad decisions.

♈ Aries | March 21-April 20. Great achievements can be made. Strike a deal, take on a new challenge, complete a creative project or engage in romance. Take the initiative and don't look back.

♉ Taurus | April 21-May 21. Make sure all the cards are on the table before signing up for a partnership or collaborating with someone. An unpleasant surprise is likely if you don't do your research carefully.

♊ Gemini | May 22-June 20. Social media makes it easier than ever to get in touch with an old friend. It will be refreshing to talk to someone who understands your background and shares your ideals.

♋ Cancer | June 21-July 22. Spend your leisure time doing something you enjoy. Filling your schedule with chores, repair jobs or shopping will leave you no time to recharge your batteries. Put time aside to relax.

♌ Leo | July 23-Aug. 22. This is a great day for family fun. Remember to include young people in your entertainment or party plans. Host an informal get-together with people you don't see regularly.

♍ Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22. Mixing business with pleasure will bring a new perspective regarding your career goals. You will learn a lot by listening and observing what's going on in your professional field.

♎ Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22. Nothing will escape your notice today. Pay attention to detail and carefully gauge what needs to be done and how much it will cost.

♏ Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21. Your ingenuity and creativity are in full swing. Increase your visibility by contacting people who are in a position to recommend you. EUGENIA LAST

Letters

Lay blame where it's due

Re: 'Black lives matter' (Metro, Dec. 10) In response to the letter telling people in neighborhoods where the rate of death for black men is high, that taking those black lives also matter, I say, "here we go again, blaming the victims." Perhaps crime rates are high in those areas because of the systematic dehumanization and marginalization of black folks in this country. If people were given equal opportunities and equal treatment, and were not oppressed to the point of exhaustion, things would be different because neighborhoods would be different. We're not just talking about violence, the issue right now is police violence and the mistreatment of blacks that continues in this country every single day.
DELORES PAULK, VIA EMAIL

I've been a law-abiding citizen my whole life, and a pacifist too, but I must say that the Garner scandal has me wanting to smash windows and burn cars too — so maybe the DAs and police need to realize how badly their corruption is backfiring. And I'm ten times more angry at the crooked DAs than I am the meathead thug cops. It's getting so bad, that other DAs should call for the arrest of the lawless prosecutors in Ferguson and Staten Island, before ALL of society turns on the rest of you. These people are destroying America and should be held accountable. Step One: remove any and all immunity district attorneys and judges enjoy. The ONLY standard should be if they broke the law, versus the current system, which says "it's OK for them to break the laws and violate due process and other federally guaranteed laws cuz we just say they are immune from being prosecuted." And isn't this immunity totally illegal and un-American? The 14th Amendment says all laws must be applied equally. It was dictators like Hitler who gave their judges and soldiers immunity to ignore the laws they swore to uphold. No more immunity.
LARKIN NOVAK, VIA EMAIL

letters@metro.us

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words. Metro reserves the right to edit all letters. Please include your name and contact info.

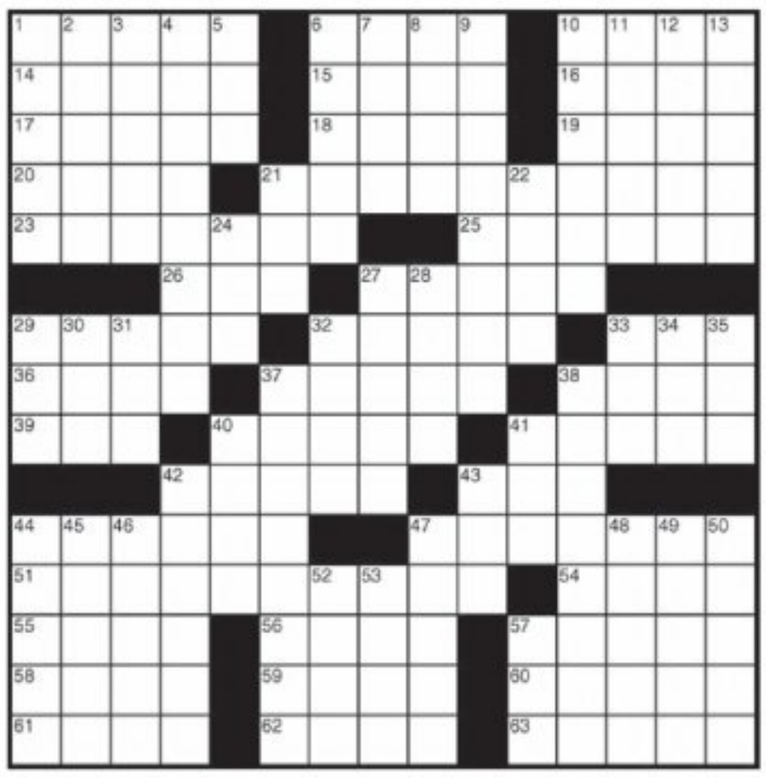
Sudoku: Easy and hard

8				2		7		
	1	9			5	3		2
	5		6		7			
		1				9		5
	2						3	
9		3				8		
			9		6		1	
3		4	7			5	8	
		5		8				9

		6		9				
	8		3		1	2		
	9				4	8		7
7				3	6	5		
8								4
		3	4	5				8
1		8	2				5	
		4	6		3		2	
				1		4		

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Crossword



Across
1 Change position
6 Bank protector
10 Planets, to poets
14 Lofty abode
15 "Cope Book" aunt
16 Sugar-cane cutter
17 Jumbo
18 Caboose's spot
19 Black, to Donne
20 "The Thin Man" pooch
21 Enlarging
23 Cut-out pattern
25 Mixtures
26 Noncom
27 Murmured softly
29 Solitude enjoyer
32 Trial setting
33 — cit. (footnote abbr.)
36 Under the covers
37 Kind of cavity
38 Retro art style
39 British FBI
40 Trills lightheartedly
41 Corsair's quest
42 Hayseeds
43 Drag behind
44 Henchman
47 Walter Scott novel
51 "Oh, — were Paradise enow!"
54 Hold up well
55 Newsman — Abel
56 Dubuque's state
57 Island near Sicily
58 Noted prep school
59 Part of WATS
60 Iroquois speakers
61 Furtive whisper
62 DEA operative
63 Love

Down
1 Epics
2 Second-story job
3 Fit to be tied
4 Bankrolled
5 Lunar new year
6 Like an alley cat
7 Remnant
8 Bowie's wife
9 Reindeer
10 Did as told
11 Worm seeker
12 Golden-haired
13 Ballads
21 A thousand G's
22 Leave in a hurry
24 Paramedic's skill
27 Loose change
28 Heavy burden
29 Insect resin
30 "Shogun" apparel
31 Rorem or Beatty
32 Disgusting
33 Zodiac sign
34 Fall mo.
35 Bashful
37 Tundra dweller
38 Lower
40 Racing sled
41 Anaconda
42 Hamster or guinea pig
43 Motel room fixtures
44 Win every game
45 Slants
46 Potpourris
47 Asimov of sci-fi
48 Sun, in combos
49 Movie with a posse
50 Rub out
52 Ibsen heroine
53 Big pitcher
57 Give — — break

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Yesterday's answer

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Sox must forge ahead

MLB. The Sox must move quickly to find talent to put at the top of their rotation.

The Red Sox may look to land Reds starter Johnny Cueto in a trade after swinging and missing on Jon Lester. / GETTY IMAGES

Red Sox Nation woke up Wednesday morning to texts, Twitter notifications and SportsCenter alerts letting them know that Jon Lester had signed with the Cubs overnight. After holding out hope for so long that he might return to Boston after being traded at the MLB deadline, disappointment filled the air.

That letdown cannot last long, though, as the Red Sox still have major work to do to fill out the top of their rotation. In 2014, the Red Sox starters had an ERA of 4.36, 26th in baseball, with teams like the Cubs, Astros and Phillies ahead of them. With only Clay Buchholz and Joe Kelly coming back as proven starters, work needs to be done and done quickly.

"Yeah, we would like to add a couple of starters," manager John Farrell told reporters at the MLB Winter Meetings earlier this week.

With a boatload of prospects and extra outfielders at their disposal, as well as one of the largest payrolls in the league, the organization can pretty much target anyone they wish via free agency or trade.

One of the more likely candidates for the Red Sox to now go after is James Shields, who most recently led a Royals staff to the World Series. The right-hander, who turns 33 later this month, is as dependable a starter as there is, throwing 203 or more innings in nine consecutive seasons between the Rays and Royals.

In his two seasons with Kansas City, Shields went 27-17 with a 3.18 ERA. He has struggled in the playoffs, though. In four postseasons, Shields has a record of 3-6 with a 5.46 ERA.

If the Red Sox do decide to go the Shields route, likely a middle-of-the-road contract for three or four years, they would still need an ace to lead their staff, as Shields more closely resembles a solid No. 2. This is where the Sox can use their available trade chips.

Yoenis Cespedes leads that group as the player likely to get the biggest name in return when packaged with young prospects. The Reds have made it clear that they are interested in adding an outfielder and willing to deal some of their rotation.

Leading that group of players is Johnny Cueto, who finished second in the NL Cy Young Award voting, going 20-9 with a 2.25 ERA in 2014. Cueto would be the type of pitcher to lead the Red Sox rotation, but it remains to be seen what they would have to give up in order to acquire him.

RYAN HANNABLE
@RyanHannable
sports@metro.us

By the numbers

2.25

Reds ace Johnny Cueto is said to be on the trading block as he will become a free agent after the 2015 season. The 28-year-old righty went 20-9 with a 2.25 ERA last season in Cincy.

DANCE WITH NEW PARTNERS

Now that the fantasy semifinals are here, the little man inside your head will tell you to dance with the girl you brought to the party. Squash that voice. The best options:

Donte's inferno

It took the Colts nearly four months, but they now realize freakishly talented rookie Donte Moncrief (50 snaps Week 13) is better than washed up Hakeem Nicks (18 snaps). That's exciting by itself, but what makes it really scintillating is the demise of Reggie Wayne. It's gotten so bad for Wayne that the Colts are openly talking about shutting him down for a bit, which would turn Moncrief into the No. 2 receiver for Andrew Luck. In a home game against a Houston defense giving up the second-most fantasy points to wideouts, "Man" Crief is likely a better option than the No. 3 wideout on your playoff squad.

Johnny Manziel may actually be a good fantasy play this week. / GETTY IMAGES

Mr. Wilson's hood

Brandon Marshall's season-ending rib/lung injury is Marquess Wilson's gain. This is a 6-foot-4 wideout that was highly productive in the Pac-12 before getting into a spat with his coach. So the Bears got a mid-round talent in the seventh round of the 2013 draft and he earned the No. 3 job with exemplary play this offseason, impressing pass-game guru Marc Trestman. Wilson gets his big breakout chance Monday, where he'll be facing a terrible Saints secondary at home.

Pickups of the week

Here are some of the best adds for Week 15:

- **Jonathan Stewart, RB, Panthers:** As long as DeAngelo Williams is inactive, Stewart is a great bet for top 20 running back production.
- **Harry Douglas, WR, Falcons:** If Julio Jones (hip) can't go against Atlanta, Douglas has proven he can step in and perform at a very high level.
- **Jaguars D/ST:** Don't use the Jags at Baltimore this week, but stash them for a Week 16 home game against the Titans.
- **Jared Cook, TE, Rams:** Cook has absolutely lit the Cardinals on fire since joining the Rams. Arizona is inept at defending tight ends.

Here's Johnny

Browns OC Kyle Shanahan knows how to handle a running quarterback. All we have to do is go back to 2012, when a then-healthy Robert Griffin III went berserk with Shanny at the controls. Now he has Johnny Manziel, more of an improvisational runner than RGIII, but just as dangerous. Manziel will also have Jordan Cameron and Josh Gordon, and is at home facing a Bengals defense that has struggled to contain running quarterbacks.

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3 SPORTS

NHL

Chicago in town to take on Bruins

The Blackhawks (19-8-1) haven't lost since Nov. 23 and are the hottest team in the NHL having won seven straight. The Bruins' (15-12-1) "streak" is a tad more modest, at one game, as they have been off since Saturday when they beat the Coyotes 5-2. Boston and Chicago will meet at TD Garden Thursday (7 p.m., NESN). Bruins captain Zdeno Chara is expected to play against the Blackhawks in his first game since injuring his left knee on Oct. 23.

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